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MEMORANDUM

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From Bucharest

TO : The Files

January 11, 1955

FROM: RFP

SUBJ: Russian Officers and Wives Accept Informal American Dinner Invitation

On December 10 Lieutenant General and Mrs. D. I. SMIRNOV, Counselor I. A. KOROLEV, Second Secretary and Mrs. A. S. GAL-STUKHOV accepted an informal dinner invitation at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Richard FUNKHOUSER, Charge d'Affaires a. i. General Smirnov had previously appeared only at the Western homes of the US and UK Military Attaches for informal dinners. The evening was perhaps noteworthy for the fact that it was the first time Russian officers have been known to bring their wives to a Western home in Bucharest.

The invitation was sent out only forty-eight hours before the dinner. It was assumed that, if the Russians were inclined to accept, the chance of their accepting on short notice was as good as on long notice. Short notice was also a well-known practice of Easterners in Bucharest, so that no offense was to be anticipated. Actually, the movies were better than average that week and a notation on the invitations was made to the effect that "animal cartoons" and a "science-fiction" film would be shown. The science-fiction film, perhaps for the best, was not available the evening of the invitation. The term had not been understood by the Russians in any case.

Acceptance came the morning of the scheduled dinner. British Legation Second Secretary and Mrs. John WHITFIELD, together with Swiss First Secretary and Mrs. Michael GELZER, were the other invited couples. Mr. Whitfield speaks some Russian; his wife, not ⁱⁿ importantly, is most attractive. The Gelzers are handsome polyglots and "neutrals". Mr. Galatukhov remembers some English from his days in London and Mr. Korolev, a smattering of French. All invitees possessed the faculty of being able to smile without particular difficulty.

General and Mrs. Smirnov somewhat disconcertingly arrived ten minutes ahead of schedule. The General is a small, rotund man, known to the ladies (as it subsequently developed) as the "little general". He had been decorated with the Legion of Merit by General EISENHOWER in 1945 for leading a tank division into Berlin. He is proud of the decoration but does not wear it at this time for "political" reasons. General GAVIN, he states, gave him his paratrooper insignia. The General demonstrates what is reportedly a characteristic of Great Russians in that he is ready to reciprocate friendship and is an enthusiastic tippler, though "tippler" is hardly the proper word. His personality appears to reflect more of the simple

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and desirable qualities developed through fighting for country than demonstrated by his more cautious political colleagues. Unfortunately, the General does not seem to understand that there are those who do not know Russian, and he speaks in Faulknerian sentences with vast enthusiasm, happily without demanding response. He has an eye for Western ladies, in fact both eyes, and is particularly appreciative as the evening lengthens of their more slender proportions.

His not unattractive wife was dressed simply, though unstylishly by Western standards, in black. She appeared to share her husband's forthrightness and ease. After failing to get much of a response to her Russian before the others arrived, she established herself comfortably on the sofa and enthusiastically poured through Harper's Bazaar and New Yorker ads, pointing to items of interest for gestured explanations. The General showed initial and momentary interest in Hi-Fi equipment, threw down three or four pineapple juice cocktails, went on to Martinis and then back to pineapple juice. The other Russians also drank copiously of pineapple juice--twice extra cans had to be procured from the basement.

Dinner, into which the guests enthusiastically threw themselves, was quickly announced. The host's Beginner's Course at the Foreign Service Institute, though stretched beyond recognizable limits, paid off, at least to the extent of being able to create noise at his end of the table. He remembered that he had learned how to say "I love ham and eggs and apple pie" which, though inserted somewhat bulkily into the conversation with little respect to context, provoked a hearty response from the Soviet ladies. They did not know the words to "~~Q tchi~~/Chorniya" nor did they appear to have heard of the song.

The Smirnovs were found to have two children, as do the Galstukhovs and the non-present MELNIKOVS (Soviet Ambassador). The Galstukhov children were ten and eight years of age. (Minor havoc was created when it was initially understood to be "eighteen" children.) The ladies liked Bucharest--"It is not as cold as Moscow".

At the far end of the table, much noise developed as some common ground was found by successively toasting Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, and Tolstoy. It seemed apparently highly amusing to the participants at the time. General Smirnov proceeded to praise the charms of the Western ladies surrounding him but apparently became so enthusiastic that Counselor Korolev, glancing uneasily at the General's wife, declined to translate all encomiums. It was about at this time the term "Little General" was uncovered and became popularly used. The General displayed a penchant for tossing down whole glasses of imported wine, which the host received with mixed emotions. Traditional training apparently allowed him to

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accomplish this not inconsiderable feat undisturbed by constitution, Counselor, or wife. (BI might wish to classify General Smirnov as a "good mixer".) The wives drank nothing; however, they managed to assume a cheery and enthusiastic demeanor throughout.

The films, which had all been previewed for content, were well received. "Tweety Bird and Sylvester" were happily at their best and struck a sympathetic Slavic response, as did an amusing Pete Smith bird-dog film. One newsreel had been finally found without Korea, Formosa, Indochina or Germany and, although one-year old, received concentrated attention. Other cartoons, sports reels, and a comedy of the Keystone-Kop vintage, with the protagonist carrying a baby along the ledge of a skyscraper, all seemed successful. Recordings of Russian music during dinner, of famous artists in the States over coffee, and popular American tunes after the films filled in the conversational pauses, which seemed to be almost eliminated as the evening progressed. The General was disappointed that no Chaliapin was available but settled for Caruso and Lily Pons. Mr. Galstukhov was greatly surprised to find that there was opera and ballet in the United States. At the end of the evening dance music evoked uncertain emotions in the guests, none of whom were fortunately constrained to dance. Colonel and Mrs. LANDER joined the group at midnight and reported that the evening seemed to be reasonably successful, judging by the distance at which the exchange of diplomatic views could be heard and the expressions on the guests' faces at their departure. The group was reportedly speaking something of the same language and putting "peaceful coexistence" into practice. It is believed that no political, economic or military intelligence of significance was sought or gained by either side during the evening. The utility of such an invitation is not known. However, it was pleasant.

cc: British Legation, Bucharest